

# The Ballarat Naturalist

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## **Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture, November 1, 2024**

Acting Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Chairperson Neville Oddie warmly welcomed the 28 members and 28 visitors who came along to the Federation University building in Wendouree or tuned-in via Zoom to attend the FNCB's 46<sup>th</sup> Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture. He expressed a special welcome to the three members of Stella Bedggood's family who joined us on the night. He also warmly acknowledged the traditional owners of the land upon which we were meeting or from which people were tuning-in.

Neville noted that apologies had been received from Angela Aldred, Andrew Arnold, Thakshi Balachandra, Judy Bone, Sheree Cartledge, Diana and Geoffrey Coverdale, Shirley Faull, Gaye Gadsden, the Honorable Catherine King MP, Clare Miller, Mark Moravec, Roger Thomas, Max Thompson and Julian Veerasingam.

We put aside our usual monthly Club Meeting to hold our annual Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture, a significant event on our Calendar of Activities each year. Before handing over to FNCB Secretary Emily Noble to introduce the background of the Lecture and the guest speaker, Neville promoted the newly published second edition of "Discovering Ballarat's Bushland", available to purchase at the special price of \$12 on the night (R.R.P. \$15). It features 37 local bushland gems in the region, how to get to them and what to keep an eye out for when you get there (geology, flora, fauna, fungi, facilities, etc.).

Emily was again humbled by the privilege of introducing the Lecture by reflecting on the wonderful legacy of the Club's late and much-revered life member Stella Bedggood, in whose honour the event was inaugurated in 1979 just a year after her untimely death aged 62.

At a time when married women didn't go to work, Stella developed a keen interest in botany, birds and small mammals whilst accompanying her husband Edwin ("Ted") into local forests where he worked as a wood-cutter. Stella's interest in botany led her to undertake a course in collecting, identifying and mounting

herbarium specimens at Creswick School of Forestry. She became an avid licensed collector, regularly sending plant specimens to Dr James Willis, the Senior Government Botanist at the National Herbarium of Victoria with whom she developed a warm friendship over decades of botanical correspondence. The known distribution of many species was extended thanks to her collections.

She was also a very gifted photographer with a long involvement with the Ballarat Camera Club including many years as President. Her photos were often included in exhibitions and illustrated many articles in “Nature Notes” in *The Courier* (Ballarat).

We have long celebrated Stella’s vast contribution to nature conservation in our region, particularly in Enfield Forest and Mt Beckworth. This year, Susan Kruss’s recently approved PhD Thesis titled “A Voice for Nature: A History of the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat” (many congratulations, Susan!) helped better quantify that contribution, along with the Club’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary publication: *The Field Naturalists’ Club of Ballarat- 1952-1977*.

Susan’s thesis included a timeline of important events in the club’s history, including Club submissions on various proposals that would impact upon the conservation values and management of local areas. Overlaying the thirteen years Stella spent as Club Secretary on that timeline (part of 1957 through to 1970) and the further eight years she spent on the Committee (also mostly in other office-bearing roles), Emily was able to pinpoint the submissions and advocacy roles that were largely undertaken by Stella. They related to a myriad of threats including clearing for softwood pine plantations, sand mines, residential development, industrial development, motorboats, water-skiing and other water-based recreational activities, inappropriate silvicultural practices (timber harvesting) and inappropriate burning regimes.

Stella was directly involved in advocacy for 19 of the 37 reserves that our Club so highly regard for their natural history values that we have included them in our latest edition of “Discovering Ballarat’s Bushland”. Thanks to her meticulous gathering of precise information, local knowledge, calm persistence and formidable botanical expertise, she garnered great respect from the local Forests Commission officers and other land managers, and much of her conservation advocacy was successful.

We largely have Stella to thank for the fact that many of our region's most precious natural treasures are still extant and at least partly managed for conservation. These areas include Enfield Forest, Canadian State Forest (now Woowookarung Regional Park), Mt Beckworth, Flax Mill Swamp, Lakes Wendouree, Learmonth and Burrumbeet, Mt Erip, Merin Merin Swamp in Clunes, Nerrin Nerrin Swamp south of Streatham, Durham Lead, Creswick Forest, Middle Swamp, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Mt Cole, Illabarook Rail Reserve, crown land in Berringa, the Linton Block and Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary.

At a landscape-scale, Stella's role in gathering flora and fauna data from 1972-78 to inform the FNCB's Land Conservation Council submissions on the Ballarat, Corangamite, Alpine, Mallee and Melbourne areas cannot be overstated. Whether it is compiling detailed flora and fauna lists, data on the distribution of hollows, preparing herbarium specimens and curating photographic records like Stella, or annotated illustrations in the field like fellow field naturalists Olivia Herbert or Helen Burgess, taking the time to observe and gather information about the living things in our natural environment continues to have an essential role in ensuring their appreciation, protection and restoration.

Thus, it was with great pleasure that Emily introduced this year's guest speaker to present the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture, Jane Rusden. Jane is a renowned Castlemaine-based artist and printmaker who loves venturing into remote natural environments to capture their uniqueness through nature journalling and art-making. Her degrees in Zoology and Visual Arts help inform her art practice, observation skills and naturalist activities. As the Convenor of BirdLife Castlemaine District, she runs monthly nature-journalling workshops, each time heading into a different environment. Emily pointed out that even though photographic technology has evolved enormously since Stella's time, almost all field guides to birds still feature paintings because they somehow capture something that photos cannot. Thus, it was with a great sense of anticipation that we sat forward to learn more from Jane and see her bring an artwork to life in front of our eyes.

Emily Noble

Enfield Grevillea  
*Grevillea bedggoodiana*



## “Nature Journalling” with Jane Rusden

Write-up by Wendy Bolger

*Jane’s enthusiastic presentation of her subject took us on a fun, step-by-step journey as we ventured into the nature journalling process.*

What do we pack? Jane emphasised the need to travel with the bare essentials, only what fits into our backpacks. We peeped into her backpack which consisted of a tiny art kit; a basic watercolour set and colour chart, a few brushes, collapsible water container and plenty of blotting tissues, plus 300 – 600-gauge art paper. For a close-up view of nature, she takes a magnifying glass, and finds the “macro” setting of her phone camera handy. And don’t forget the nature journal, small enough in size to fit snugly in the backpack. To consider one’s comfort is important too, such as clothes to suit the weather conditions of the day. Let’s not suffer hypothermia or heat stroke. Jane suggests a fold-up stool if you wish, although she mostly chooses to sit on the ground.



Where to go? Whether journeying into the remote landscape or just down the road, keep in mind there are plenty of interesting places to visit around Ballarat. Check out the latest edition of “*Discovering*

*Ballarat's Bushland: A guide to 37 natural places in the Ballarat region* published by the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat in October 2024. The FNCB's objective is to "stimulate interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation and protection of the natural environment".

*Finally, we're off down the road or track, safely arriving at our destination.*

Choose a place to sit – quietly, without everyday distractions. "Stepping outside the human world" as Jane states, our minds are now free to be present here. Our senses are more alert to any sounds, movements, smells and textures, as well as visual cues. Scientific inquiry - what? why? how? and where? comes into play to identify connections between the flora and fauna, plus seasonal and environmental elements within a particular topography.

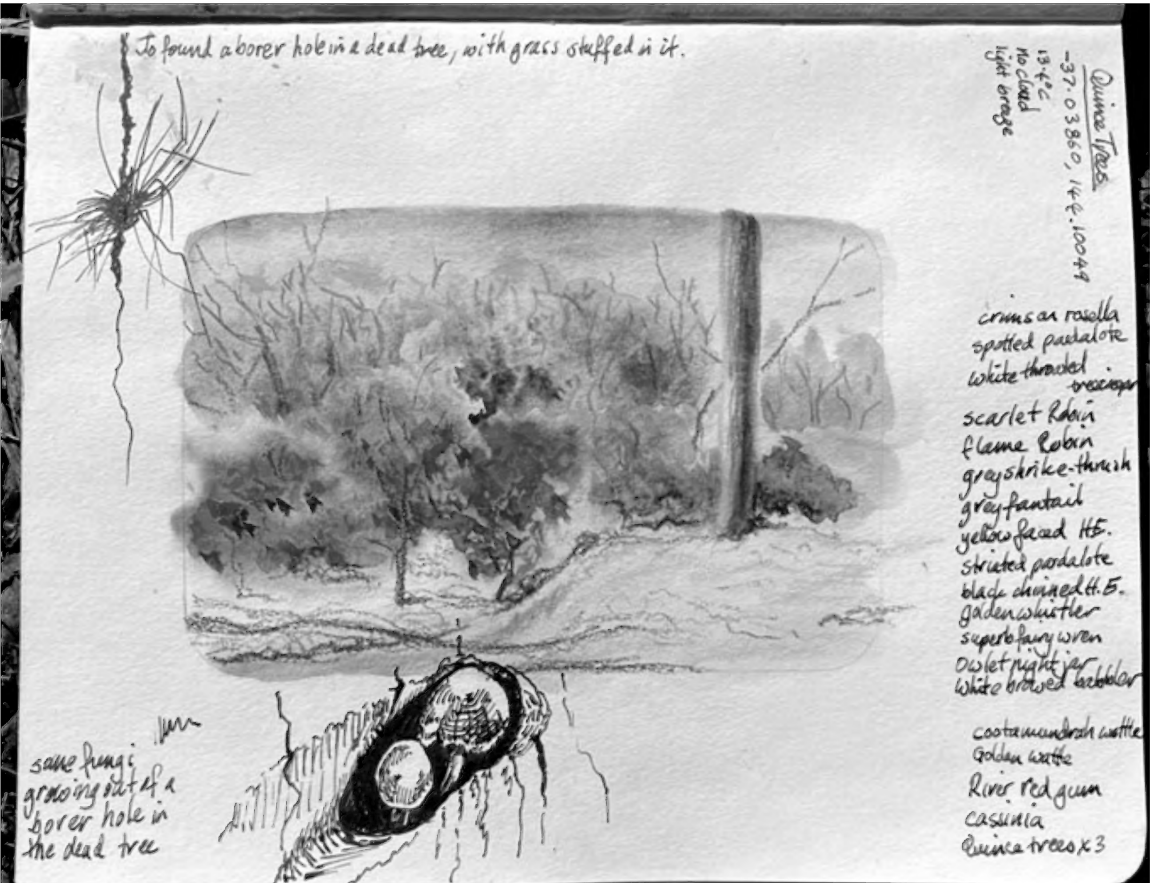


*Red-browed Finch,*  
ink and watercolour  
on paper.  
Artist: Jane Rusden.

### How to record findings?

Our nature journal now comes into play to record "a snapshot in time". A blank page confronts us. Jane acknowledges that "it can be terrifying". She dissolves this initial tension by splashing watercolour on to the page first which becomes the background to her art composition. She also suggested loosening up exercises to shift into our right-sided brain creative zone, by making squiggles, circles, dots, etc. on the page. Next step is to choose a subject. Something that's not moving is easiest, such as a leaf, flower, or cone. Draw it as simple shapes - round, triangle, rectangle, etc. This becomes the foundation for your drawing, then add the subject's

intricate details. Fill the rest of the page with in-depth comments about your experience and observations. Use whatever medium and style best suits you. Dive in! Don't worry if the paper buckles or an ant paint trail occurs. It's all part of your nature experience! Jane highly recommends the book "*The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling*" by John Muir Laws, and also his online Nature Journal workshops.



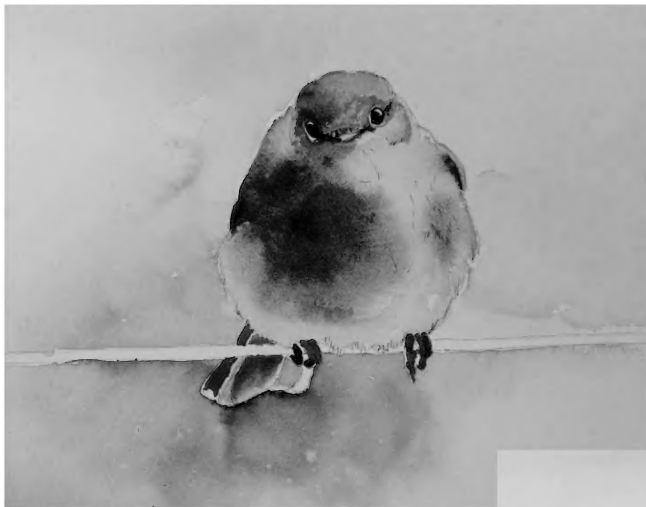
Nature journaling at Quince Trees, Muckleford.  
Artist: Jane Rusden.

In the final part of the presentation, Jane demonstrated watercolour techniques by painting a portrait of a bird from one of her photographs. We were mesmerised by her relaxed manipulation of blotches of watercolour over the surface of the paper. Slowly a *Jacky Winter* emerged to ‘look us in the eye’.

Jane’s generous sharing of her personal process in nature journalling highlighted a creative pathway to an enjoyable, immersive nature experience. At the same time, this process helps to hone our species observation and recording skills, valuable for research purposes. The wonder and beauty of nature is revealed and celebrated!



Jane demonstrating her techniques at our meeting with her subject the Jacky Winter (L)



Sacred Kingfisher painting in one of Jane's Journals



*Join Jane on group field excursions near Castlemaine to refine your nature journalling skills on the first Sunday of the month, 9.30-11.30am (except Aug. & Jan.).*



## **Regeneration after February 2024's wildfire in the Ross Creek State Forest**

(Note: this report includes common names of species seen – refer to tables following for scientific names).

18 members arrived at my property called “Stringybark” on a beautiful spring Sunday afternoon. It was almost a year to the day that some of them had last visited to join in the celebration of Bill’s life held Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The sky shone blue, the breeze was light and the temperature mild, a carbon copy of the day 12 months ago and a very poignant reminder of a dear husband and member no longer with us in person, but definitely with us in spirit.

After a brief introduction to the day from Emily, we organised ourselves into six cars to depart in convoy heading east along Skippers Rd. The Ross Creek State Forest begins shortly after leaving “Stringybark” and Emily had asked us to take particular note of the forest in its natural state as we drove along.

It is a relatively young forest. The land was cleared during gold-rush times and the young trees have grown since then. From the car, we observed the Enfield Grevillea and tussocky grasses. We continued driving and turned left onto Victoria Rd. As we passed Victoria Dam and a more open area, we noticed the difference in the vegetation due to this area having been part of a planned burn in Autumn 2023.

Our first stop was at a site near the wildfire’s boundary in Victoria Rd. This was our first sign of where the wildfire had been - so obvious with all the tree trunks blackened. As soon as we stepped out of the cars, a Slender Sun-orchid was spotted. We could see clearly where the firefighters had managed to stop the fire. There was evidence of bulldozer work where firefighters had created an access track into the forest and a firebreak. Peter Dalman had been present during the fire driving one of the fire trucks. He was able to explain some of the work carried out both during and after a fire. One practice is for CFA personnel to return to the fire ground after the fire to look for unsafe trees and knock them over, rather than leave them to fall over on their own. These areas are sometimes opened up for firewood collection. Another practice is for some of the fallen trees to be moved into position to block vehicle access to the rough tracks which had only been created at the time to fight the fire. They are not intended to become permanent tracks.

We spent almost an hour exploring this area. Emily noticed a South African Weed Orchid and promptly pulled the top off it and squashed it to stop the flowers from being pollinated. The small grass trees were prolific here with many budding flower spikes stimulated by the fire. We referred to the area as a “field of spikes”.





Epicormic growth

Small Grass Tree  
*Xanthorrhoea minor*

Fran showed that she was a field nat through-and-through when someone spotted a huntsman on her hat. She calmly stood whilst members photographed it, before gently taking her hat off and examining the spider more closely. She then carefully relocated it to a nearby plant.

Peter encouraged us to look up where we observed a number of hanging branches which were not attached to any tree. They are just waiting for the right conditions to allow them to fall, hopefully not during our visit! We noticed in this area on the edge of the fire, that although the trunks of the trees were burnt, the tree canopy was still relatively intact. Peter also pointed out a tree that looked solid from one side but when you walked around to the other side you could see it was only being held up on two sides with the middle hollowed out by fire.

We found many plants and trees recovering well here – see list following. One of the benefits of being out in a group of keen-eyed field naturalists is that many eyes find all sorts of things! Just before leaving this area a very exciting find was some Great Sun-orchids

*Thelymitra aristata*—right beautifully open and just waiting to be photographed.

Their location on the west side of Victoria Rd and on a north facing slope is only the fourth location in the Ross Creek and Enfield Forests that Emily knows of this particular orchid growing.



#### SPECIES LIST – STOP 1, VICTORIA ROAD

Enfield Grevillea	<i>Grevillea bedgoodiana</i>
Tussock Grass	<i>Poa labillardierei</i>
Red-anthered Wallaby-grass	<i>Rytidosperma pallidum</i>
Slender Sun Orchid	<i>Thelymitra pauciflora</i>
Trailing Goodenia	<i>Goodenia lanata</i>
Small Grass-tree	<i>Xanthorrhoea minor</i>
Blue Star Creeper	<i>Isotoma fluviatilis</i>
Spotted Sun-orchid	<i>Thelymitra ixioides</i>
Rush-leaf Sun-orchid	<i>Thelymitra juncifolia</i>
Blue Bottle-daisy	<i>Lagenophora stipitata</i>
South African Weed Orchid	<i>Disa bracteata</i>
Woolly Wattle	<i>Acacia lanigera</i>
Wattle Mat-rush	<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>
Tall Sundew	<i>Drosera auriculata</i>
Broad-leaved Peppermint	<i>Eucalyptus dives</i>
Narrow-leaved Peppermint	<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>
Messmate	<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>
Red Stringybark	<i>Eucalyptus macrorhyncha</i>
Milkmaid Lily	<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>
Trigger Plant	<i>Stylidium armeria</i>
Pink Bells	<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>
Honey-pots	<i>Acrotriche serrulata</i>
Showy (Arrow-leaved) Violet	<i>Viola betonicifolia</i>
Spotted Pardalote	<i>Pardalotus punctatus</i>
Bronzehood Caladenia	<i>Caladenia transitoria</i>
Ivy-leaf Violet	<i>Viola hederacea</i>

Great (Scented) Sun-orchid  
 White-throated Treecreeper  
 Crimson Rosella  
 Heath Tea-tree  
 Badge Huntsman  
 Smooth Parrot-pea  
 Golden Bush-pea  
 Black-anther Flax-lily

*Thelymitra aristata*  
*Cormobates leucophaea*  
*Platycercus elegans*  
*Gaudium myrsinoides*  
*Neosparassus diana*  
*Dillwynia glaberrima*  
*Pultenaea gunnii*  
*Dianella revoluta*

We returned to the cars and set off further along Victoria Rd to our second stop at the Ross Creek Trail Bike Visitor Area where we made use of the picnic tables to enjoy our afternoon tea and some chat. We were surprised to find the place deserted on a fine Sunday, but we didn't mind at all! The peace and quiet did not last long as we were joined by two unregistered cars which arrived on the back of trailers behind other vehicles. The unregistered cars were duly unloaded and two of the people promptly took off at speed in these cars along the dirt roads of the forest. It is always interesting to see other people's interpretation of what the forest and bush is for!

Close to the Visitor Area was a beautiful carpet of Chocolate Lilies. (Right ) Many other wildflowers were also seen here – see list. A good find was the Pale Vanilla-lily with its flowers more drooping than the Chocolate Lily flowers. Another colony of Great Sun-orchids became Emily's fifth known site for this species in the Ross Creek/ Enfield Forests. An emerging Hyacinth Orchid's asparagus-like first shoot was also seen, quite early for this species which is usually seen flowering in Summer.



## PLANT LIST - STOP 2, ROSS CREEK TRAIL BIKE VISITOR AREA

Chocolate Lily  
 Button Everlasting  
 Common Rice-flower  
 Yam Daisy (Murnong)  
 Showy (Arrow-leaved) Violet  
 Buttercup  
 Pale Vanilla-lily

*Arthropodium strictum*  
*Coronidium scorpioides*  
*Pimelea humilis*  
*Microseris walteri*  
*Viola betonicifolia*  
*Ranunculus sp.*  
*Arthropodium milleflorum*

Ivy-leaf (Native) Violet	<i>Viola hederacea</i>
Variable Plantain	<i>Plantago varia</i>
Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea	<i>Daviesia leptophylla</i>
Hyacinth Orchid	<i>Dipodium sp.</i>
Great Sun-orchid	<i>Thelymitra aristata</i>
Austral Stork's-bill	<i>Pelargonium australe</i>

After our afternoon tea, we continued in convoy east along Incoll's Rd before turning into Carey's Road. Emily and I had marked the spot the previous Tuesday by placing some white rocks and a few burnt sticks in a pile close to the edge of the road. We were very pleased to find our marker easily and the convoy pulled up along the side of the road.



We were now in an area of the forest which had been more severely burnt. There was no canopy remaining, just a sea of burnt blackened trees. The green of the epicormic growth and the understorey plants was in stark contrast to the pure black trunks. With the blue of the sky as the background, the colour palette was vibrant and sparkling in the late afternoon sun. This was on the left-hand side of the road where we had parked our cars. The forest on the other side of the road had not been burnt by the February 2024 wildfire at all. It had been burnt by a planned burn in Autumn 2023 and it was easy then to compare the differences between the two sides of the road. We found a Common Bird-orchid which was late flowering due to the fire. It would already have finished flowering in other areas.

Unfortunately, Emily and I were not able to show the others the Water Skink we had seen on the Tuesday. We found its earthen tunnel, but it was not at home this time. John Gregurke found some young, weedy Cape Broom plants and promptly pulled them out.

### SPECIES LIST – STOP 3, CAREYS ROAD

Trailing Goodenia	<i>Goodenia lanata</i>
Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea	<i>Daviesia leptophylla</i>
Stinking Pennywort	<i>Hydrocotyle laxiflora</i>
Common Bird-orchid	<i>Chiloglottis valida</i>
Broad-leaved Peppermint	<i>Eucalyptus dives</i>
Brown Stringybark	<i>Eucalyptus baxteri</i>
Messmate	<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>
Bonfire Moss	<i>Funaria hygrometrica</i>
Broad-leaf Stinkweed	<i>Opercularia ovata</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>
Twining Fringe-lily	<i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>
Eucalypt Variegated Beetle	<i>Paropsisterna cloelia</i>
Cape Broom	<i>Genista monspessulana</i>
Scented Sundew	<i>Drosera aberrans</i>
Common Flat-pea	<i>Platylobium obtusangulum</i>
Myrtle Wattle	<i>Acacia myrtifolia</i>
Horse-dropping Fungi	<i>Pisolithus arhizus</i>
Swamp Pennywort	<i>Centella cordifolia</i>
Hairy Centrolepis	<i>Centrolepis strigosa</i>
Sooty Orb-weaver	<i>Salsa sp.</i>
Blackwood	<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>

Here we said goodbye to Andy, David & Susan. The rest of us proceeded to re-trace our route back to Victoria Road, along to Skippers Rd and back towards “Stringybark”. Being in the lead car, we were lucky to see a Black Wallaby hop across the road in front of us. Further along, we saw a couple of Eastern Grey Kangaroos as well.

We had time for one final stop at a small, picturesque dam on Skippers Rd. Neville decided to be adventurous and set-off to walk the full circuit around the dam. He did the rest of us a favour by disturbing a White-necked Heron on the far side of the dam. The heron took off and flew gracefully over the dam to come and perch on a branch much closer to where the rest of us were.

SPECIES LIST – STOP 4, SKIPPERS RD DAM

Black (Swamp) Wallaby	<i>Wallabia bicolor</i>
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	<i>Macropus giganteus</i>
Australian Wood Duck	<i>Chenonetta jubata</i>
Tall Spike-rush	<i>Eleocharis sphacelata</i>
Grey Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i>
Tadpoles	
White-necked Heron	<i>Ardea pacifica</i>
Water Milfoil	<i>Myriophyllum sp.</i>
Slender Rice-flower	<i>Pimelea linifolia</i>
Pink Bells	<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>
Erect Guinea-flower	<i>Hibbertia riparia</i>
Golden Bush-pea	<i>Pultenaea gunnii</i>

Back at Stringybark by 6:00pm, we then enjoyed each other’s company while eating our BYO tea on the balcony. The late sun shone on the bush and provided a lovely backdrop to view while eating. By mutual agreement we then decided it was too long to wait until sunset to put up the moth sheets. We would leave that activity for another time. By 7:00pm those still here took their leave, having enjoyed a lovely afternoon of good company and visiting interesting places in nature.

Kathy Elder (with thanks to Emily Noble and Vireya Jacquard for their assistance). Images Carol Hall



Blue Star Creeper  
*Isotoma fluviatilis*.  
Ross Creek

**SEANA – Marysville; 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> October 2024**  
Reflections from Ballarat FNC attendees

**1. Steavenson Falls and Beauty Spot Nature Trail Sat AM.**

A short walk to the falls was most rewarding with excellent views of the water cascading down 84m into the river valley. We then moved to the Beauty Spot Nature Trail which follows the Leary Creek, through tree fern groves and wooded areas. The highlight for us, other than the Maroonhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*) and many budding Common Bird Orchids (*Chiloglottis valida*) was a savage altercation between three Pied Currawongs (*Strepera graculina*) and a solitary Common Ringtail Possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*). Our group was divided in assigning perpetrator and victim. Were the currawongs attacking the possum drey in the top of a tree fern in the hope of an easy lunch of a young possum, or were the currawongs evicting the possum from their nest where it had taken up residence? Nature kept its secrets close to its chest as the possum reluctantly staged a tactical retreat and calm was restored.

**Lady Talbot Drive Sun AM.** We met at a picnic area on the Taggerty River and while waiting, the astute birdwatchers observed a Flame Robin (*Petroica phoenicea*) across the river. The robin kindly relocated to a tree adjacent to where the less astute were standing affording great views for all and guaranteeing a late departure. We then followed the Taggerty River to Keppel Falls. The walk to the falls yielded lots of lovely ferns including Water Fern (*Histiopteris incisa*), Hard Water Fern (*Blechnum wattsi*) and Necklace Fern (*Asplenium flabellifolium*), and great views of the rock studded river. The walk will be a foodie trail later in the summer with Australian Mulberry (*Hedycarya angustifolia*), Small Leaf Bramble (*Rubus parvifolius*) and Mountain Pepper (*Tasmannia lanceolata*) in evidence.

Max Thompson

Once again a very well organised and successful weekend was enjoyed and was based at the Function Centre at Gallipoli Park Marysville and hosted by Ringwood FNC. Around 100 attended including 6 from Ballarat FNC. Tasty meals were catered for by the staff of a local restaurant.

Saturday night's Guest Speaker, Sue Parry described the gradual recovery of Lake Mountain after the 2009 bushfires (which also destroyed much of Marysville). I took the day visit to that area on the Saturday escorted by Sue as well. We explored some of the ski



runs which at the moment are glowing with the dense yellow flowering bushes of Alpine Phebalium *Leionema phyllicifolium* and in the background were thick stands of Snow Gums that are regrowing by either seedlings or from the base of the white stags.



On the other side of the carpark in the bush, there were many attractive bushes of Long Leaf Wax Flower *Philotheca myoporoides*. One Flame Robin was sighted near the Lake Mountain carpark as well.

On Sunday I chose 2 half day walks, one being along a beautiful 1km path beside the creek to Keppel Falls, lined with many varieties of bright green ferns and with many tall Tree Ferns in the background, also with numerous new fronds . Another highlight was having good views of a bright pink Rose Robin.

Sunday night's Guest Speaker came from Healesville Sanctuary and spoke of the complexities around *Three decades of recovering the Helmeted Honeyeater*. Some of the Field Nats had spent that day at the Sanctuary including having an extensive guided tour.

Val Hocking

Peter and I travelled to Marysville a day early and went via a longish route through the Murchison Gap, Yea and Alexandra. The information centre and wetlands centre at Yea is worth visiting. On our extra day we went to Steavensons Falls with excellent water flow and along Lady Talbot drive, now mostly reopened since the 2009

fires. We enjoyed our trip to Cambarville, reading about this former timber cutting town, established to harvest the mountain ash left after the 1939 fires but itself twice burnt down with not much remaining. Of interest was the rediscovery of Leadbeaters Possum there. It was considered extinct until Eric Wilkinson found two in 1961 and took two photos – the first ever taken. In 1971 Leadbeaters Possum was proclaimed Victorian fauna emblem. In 2011 a tiny mountain ash was planted to commemorate 50 years since rediscovery. That tree, guarded and with a plaque in, now already impressively tall. At the planting of the tiny seedling in Cambarville, Eric Wilkinson symbolically passed the future to a young lady for today's young people to protect our faunal emblem into the future. In 2009, 45% of the possums' habitat was destroyed, halving the known population and again putting the species at risk of extinction. It is believed that today fewer than 1000 possums are alive.

Another day we drove to Lake Mountain and walked the Leadbeaters Possum route. We learned that in 2003, 30 nest boxes were installed and by 2007, possums had occupied 28 with 200 individuals believed to be present across the plateau. However then came Black Saturday in 2009, burning most of the plateau and more than 95% of the possum population. Miraculously two possum families survived in a partially burnt gully. Eight years after the fires, fewer than 10 Leadbeaters Possums had been detected on the Lake Mountain Plateau but recently a pair has been discovered using a new nest box, not far from the car park. As a sign declares "Recovery to pre fire numbers is likely to be a long wait."

Claire and Peter Dalman

The Elephant tree on way to  
Big Tree - Cambarville.  
Image P D



### **Ballarat SEANA 17-19th Oct 2025**

A small group has begun planning our big event As we will probably be welcoming up to 100 people and excursion numbers are to be set at no more than 20 per group, we are now asking for volunteers to both lead these excursions and others to act as facilitators.

If you are happy to be involved in any way, please contact Emily. If you can volunteer as an excursion leader, we would appreciate an outline of your desired destinations, whether it is to be a half or full day outing and whether you could offer to repeat your event.

Excursions will be on both Saturday and Sunday 9 am to 4 30pm with a mix of half and full day offerings.

### **FNCB Excursion to Western Treatment Plant on Sunday 9th February 2024**

Leaving from Fed Uni car park at 8.30pm; Return by 4.30pm.

Alternative meeting place Foodworks Car park Learmonth St Buninyong at 9.00am.

Toilet stop at BP service station on Geelong Ring Road

- Wear long sleeves, long pants and closed shoes, hat, clothes to suit weather. Sun screen and insect repellent. Bring food and drink for whole day outing. Binoculars, telescopes, field guides, note book.

***You will Need to let John Gregurke know if wishing to attend. Numbers will be limited by the number of people who have Bird Watching Permits.***

### **Update re booksales - *Discovering Ballarat's Bushland***

Thank you to all members who have purchased one or more copies of our latest publication, *Discovering Ballarat's Bushland*, 2nd edition. Thank you also to those members who are looking after a bulk supply and selling copies everywhere they go!

We have also secured the help of some local outlets to sell the book. They include:- Collins Books, Lydiard St & Bridge Mall, Tourist Info Centre Sturt Street, Eureka Centre Gift Shop.

Since 4th October, we have sold an amazing total of 313 copies!! If anyone asks you about the book, please direct them to one of these outlets.

Club members price- \$10 per book.– available at our meeting nights  
The Recommended Retail Price for sales to the general public is \$15.

Kathy Elder - Treasurer

### **2025/26 Syllabus Planning**

At our January meeting , the committee will begin planning for the next 12 months guest speakers and excursions.

We would appreciate any suggestions from club members to make this task easier.

Please let Emily know your thoughts.

### **Our Next Club Meeting Friday 6th December:**

**“More inspiring stories from FNCCB’s illustrious past”,**  
to be presented by Susan Kruss PhD. Hybrid meeting.

Excitingly, her full PhD titled “A voice for nature: a history of the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat” is now accessible online through Federation Research Online. Here is the link:

<https://researchonline.federation.edu.au>

To find it, scroll down to ‘Browse our collections’, click on ‘Theses PhD and Masters by Research’, then “Ballarat”, then "Kruss, Susan”. It is an incredible research paper that is a wonderful resource for our Club.

Susan has kindly offered to email any interested members a pdf copy. Please email Susan: [skruss@icloud.com](mailto:skruss@icloud.com) to request a pdf copy if you would like one.

### **Sunday 8th December Field Trip- 3pm – 7pm:**

**“Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary” to be led by Emily Noble.**

Meet at the Clare Miller Environment Centre at Clarksdale,  
360 Linton-Piggoreet Road, Linton, at 3pm.

We will wander out to a couple of locations within the Sanctuary before returning to the Environment Centre for a BYO dinner from 5.45pm.

Wear weather-appropriate clothes and clean, sturdy shoes. Bring water, camera, binoculars, field guides, afternoon tea, dinner, thermos and camp chair.

*A volunteer is still needed to write up this field trip*

## **Meetings and Excursions**

**Fri Dec 6th** Speaker Susan Kruss *More inspiring stories from the  
FNCB's illustrious past.*

**Sun Dec 8th 3pm** Christmas break-up at Clarkesdale Bird  
Sanctuary

### ***Future events***

**Fri Feb 7th** Amanda Ashton *40 years of BirdLife Ballarat*

**Sun Feb 9th 8.30 am** Birds of The Western Treatment Plant  
Werribee led by John Gregurke

*Volunteers needed to write up these events for our newsletter.*

**Next Committee meeting** Tues January 28th at 5pm at Emily's  
home. BYO picnic tea

**SEANA planning meeting** Wed 11th Dec 10.30 am at Kathy's  
home

**Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at  
7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of  
Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree),  
Committee**

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**Club email:** [ballaratfnc@gmail.com](mailto:ballaratfnc@gmail.com)

**Meetings** - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.  
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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